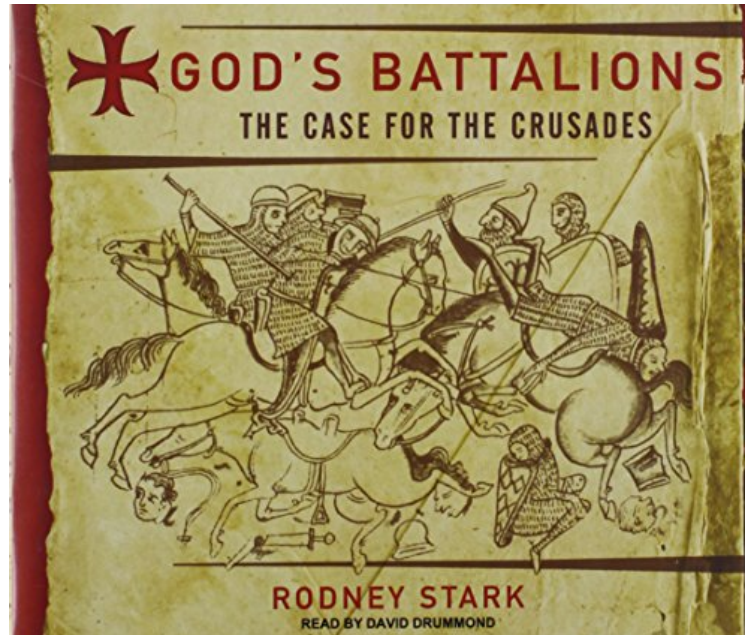


(Get free) God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades

God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades

Rodney Stark

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Rodney Stark : God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Best Treatment on the Crusades By Joel Tay The best treatment on the crusades. This book is excellent for anyone interested in finding out the truth about the crusades and why it is actually a very noble thing rather than the usual cruel massacre of the Muslims that is often portrayed in the media. If you are a history buff and like a retelling of every event that has happened and an analysis of what happened and why, this book is something you will want to get. I got this as someone I regard as being very knowledgeable on the subject recommended this book. I am impressed. It is very accurate and far better than a lot of the other books on the crusade in the market. The book covers the real reason for the crusades -- defending against the Islamic invasions, pillage and attacks on European land. The history is covered in great detail. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Fun and simple, with interesting historical contextualization. By Concoriul Stark has revived a European understanding of the Crusades as a necessary response to the rapid spread of Islam into Europe. He suggests that European Christianity was justified in their aggressive response to the exponential growth of Islam, through imperial conquest and forced conversion. The Crusades have been (justly) critiqued by secular and Islamic scholars, so Stark's contrasting interpretation is of interest. His (negative) discussions of Arab culture and learning and his (more neutral) reviews of the Crusades themselves were of light value, but I found most value in his commentary on how changing ideology leads us to use and explain the Crusades in different ways. My high rating is for this commentary, and not for the less-substantial main thrust of his argument, which I didn't find well-defended. Stark suggests that 18th-19th century Europeans glamorized the Crusades as a 'romantic' endeavor, at some level removing the historical events from their historic political context. Then, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century, Muslim

writers and speakers recast the Crusades as European aggression. Since then, secular writers have used the Crusades to criticize Western religion, and now this religious author defends them as part of a defense of European religion. This is an academic polemic written for a popular audience, and has its place in spite of its weaknesses in detail and argument. I would love to see it spark a book written by Christians, Muslims, and secular writers that compares and discusses how these perspectives have changed over time - a discussion which Stark has re-ignited, and which we could all benefit from overhearing!

10 of 12 people found the following review helpful. *God's Battalions: Those Other Caped Crusaders* By Rachel Robinson Remember the days just after 9/11 when many claimed the West was finally paying for its crimes against Muslims during the Crusades? They were wrong - and they weren't the first to misunderstand what happened during the years of fighting between Christian Crusaders and Muslim soldiers. Rodney Stark's newest book, *God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades*, helps explain and dispel several of the most common myths about the crusades - and he has quite a few myths to choose from. Rather than making new claims about the period, Stark instead summarizes much of the historical work already done on the crusades, providing an easy to read and relatively brief synthesis of events which have always been easy to misunderstand. The book is a well-written and balanced introduction to the subject and to several of the most prominent interpretations of the source materials. The crusades ended in the 13th century, but even so the image of the chain-mail garbed man with his emblematic red cross still permeates our popular culture. Our children play with Lego crusaders. Some enjoy crusader video games. Crusader costumes are available for all ages, and the iconic image of the crusader may be found in both cartoons and popular movies - but what do most of us actually know about these men and about their fight? Not much - at least not much that is accurate, argues Stark. And this is nothing new. For one thing, it has often been assumed that the crusaders were motivated by greed rather than piety. Why else would tens of thousands of men travel so far and leave their homes for so long? Surely they expected to gain from their exploits, right? Wrong. Actually, points out Stark, crusading was prohibitively expensive - so expensive that it was virtually impossible to make a profit as a crusader: "The best estimate is that a typical crusader needed to raise at least four or five times his annual income before he could set forth. This reveals the absurdity of all claims that the crusaders were mostly landless younger sons, since it would have been cheaper for families to have kept such sons at home and provided them with an adequate inheritance." (p. 113) Far from being the hot-headed, blood-thirsty imperialists historians have often envisioned, most crusaders were motivated by their faith: "Had the crusaders been motivated not by religion but by land and loot, the knights of Europe would have responded earlier, in 1063, when Pope Alexander II proposed a Crusade to drive the infidel Muslims out of Spain. Unlike the Holy Land, Moorish Spain was extremely wealthy, possessed an abundance of fertile lands, and was close at hand. But hardly anyone responded to the pope's summons. Yet only thirty-three years later, tens of thousands of crusaders set out for the dry, impoverished wastes of faraway Palestine. What was different? Spain was not the Holy Land! Christ had not walked the streets of Toledo, nor had he been crucified in Seville." (p. 118) Stark also points out that, while the conflicts that led to the Crusades go back to at least the 7th century, Muslim antagonism about the Crusades is a fairly new development: "...claims that Muslims have been harboring bitter resentments about the Crusades for a millennium are nonsense: Muslim antagonism about the Crusades did not appear until about 1900, in reaction against the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the onset of actual European colonialism in the Middle East. And anti-crusader feelings did not become intense until after the founding of the state of Israel." (p. 8-9) So much for the 9/11 theory. Stark also tackles the claim that the Crusades were imperialistic attacks on a peaceful, tolerant, intellectually superior Muslim culture. For one thing, the settlements that crusaders did manage to found in the Holy Land were outrageously expensive to maintain; far from providing a source of income, they instead added to the already prohibitive expenses the crusaders had taken on in order to join the fight. Imperialism would have been impractical at best: "In terms of economic exploitation, it would be more apt to identify Europe as a colony of the Holy Land, since the very substantial flow of wealth and resources was from the West to the East!" (p. 173) Though Arab societies did have better access to great works of Greek philosophy and literature than Europe did, they made poor use of them; in fact, Greek authors like Plato and Aristotle were actually bad for Arab scholarship. Stark writes, "...rather than treat these works as attempts by Greek scholars to answer various questions, Muslims intellectuals quickly read them in the same way as the read the Qur'an--as settled truths to be understood without question or contradiction--and thus to the degree that Muslim thinkers analyzed these works, it was to reconcile apparent internal disagreements." (p. 62) Contrary to popular belief, the West was technologically as well as intellectually superior to the Arabs at this time. While sources from this period are often unreliable, we do know that following the Muslim conquest of North Africa and Spain the wheel fell out of use for centuries--not because people forgot about it, but because their refusal to build on the knowledge they did have led them to believe they had no use for such a device. In contrast, Westerners used these centuries to develop not only wheeled vehicles but also horses and harnesses, plows, crossbows, productive agriculture, and a host of many other things. It's no wonder the crusaders were able to successfully fight the Muslims despite the great expense and distance from their homeland. In addition to addressing these myths, Stark also narrates each of the crusades chronologically, giving the causes and methods of each campaign while also illuminating internal political conflicts of the time. *God's Battalions* treats both Muslim and Christian sources fairly, allowing the reader to glimpse a little of the lives and culture of those on each side of the conflict. Stark's introductory work will be valuable

to both seasoned scholars and curious laymen for some time to come, and offers much-needed context for those who seek to understand today's conflicts between the West and the Arab world.

In *God's Battalions*, award-winning author Rodney Stark takes on the long-held view that the Crusades were the first round of European colonialism, conducted for land, loot, and converts by barbarian Christians who victimized the cultivated Muslims. To the contrary, Stark argues that the Crusades were the first military response to unwarranted Muslim terrorist aggression. Stark reviews the history of the seven major Crusades from 1095 to 1291, demonstrating that the Crusades were precipitated by Islamic provocations, centuries of bloody attempts to colonize the West, and sudden attacks on Christian pilgrims and holy places. Although the Crusades were initiated by a plea from the pope, Stark argues that this had nothing to do with any elaborate design of the Christian world to convert all Muslims to Christianity by force of arms. Given current tensions in the Middle East and terrorist attacks around the world, Stark's views are a thought-provoking contribution to our understanding and are sure to spark debate.

"Filled with fascinating historical glimpses of monks and Templars, priests and pilgrims, kings and contemplatives, Stark pulls it all together and challenges us to reconsider our view of the Crusades." ---Publishers Weekly
About the Author: Rodney Stark is the award-winning author of *How the West Won*, *The Victory of Reason*, *The Rise of Christianity*, *God's Battalions*, and many other books. He serves as Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University, where he is codirector of the Institute for Studies of Religion. David Drummond has narrated over seventy audiobooks for Tantor, in genres ranging from current political commentary to historical nonfiction, from fantasy to military, and from thrillers to humor. He has garnered multiple AudioFile Earphones Awards as well as an Audie Award nomination. Visit him at drummondvoice.com.
From AudioFile: Using a variety of sources, Stark makes a politically incorrect, but strong, case that the Crusades were a defensive war intended to retake lands that had been Christian until the Moslems conquered them. David Drummond gives a splendid reading of Stark's work, which has one overall message: Everything we've been taught about the Crusades is wrong. Drummond's voice has a light touch as he describes events that take place over several centuries: wars, intrigue, religious disputes, and the slow transformation of formerly Christian lands under Moslem rule. While his vocal touch may be light, his disciplined delivery is strong, clear, and consistently controlled. M.T.F. AudioFile 2010, Portland, Maine